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A BALLAD
A Ballad
of the
French Revolution.

1791

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32055

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OF THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION.

To the tune of "*Ça ira.*"

THE French, the French, they had a king,
Who cost three thousand pounds a day;

The French grew tired of the thing,

And told him, Sire, we will not pay;

Unless you let us have a senate,

To look a little into things,

Redress our grievances, and when it

Has lost you, Sire, have done with kings.

The presbyterian Necker humph'd,

And spread the news at the levee;

Shew'd his huge ledgers, fairly summ'd,

And left the empty treasury's key.

The queen grew red, and stamp'd, and swore,

And sent for Monsieur de Calonne;

To levy her some millions more,

By hook or crook, by force or loan.

A

"Madame,

“Madame (said he), the bayonet,
Which us’d to serve in times of risk,
Won’t do; for without paying it,
What army will support the risk?”

“And would you doom a queen to lack
The means her faro to afford;
To steal the diamonds for her neck,
And miss the joys of bed and board?”

Breteuil (to lose him were a curse),
Breteuil would from my toilet fly;
If there’s no money in my purse,
He’ll see no lightnings in my eye.

How shall D’Artois, without my gold,
His orgies keep at Bagatelle;
Or Polignac’s attachment hold,
If presents, pensions, places fail?”

“Madame, the people are too many,
I fear, for all that we can do;
But, if I get a feeling penny,
I’ll try—the rest shall be for you.”

He

He call'd in ev'ry louis d'or,
And put a brazen face upon't ;
The clipt coin pension'd as before,
And Court kept tight another month.

At last, at last, the mint grew cold,
Nor gold nor silver more would run—
Where now must Joy his revels hold ?
The spider curtains Trianon.

Notables meet, Notables part,
And leave their business to the States ;
Necker returns with lighter heart,
Re-calculates, and prints, and prates.

Three hundred Dons the Nobles choose,
In Spanish hat and nodding plume :
In golden waistcoat, peaked shoes,
And doublets that may last till doom.

Three hundred priests, with head-crown bare,
Where neither hair nor horn may grow ;
Come, like black cattle to a fair,
De par l'eglise in solemn show.

It would have pleas'd a child to stare
At Noirs in uniform array'd ;
Badges those people mostly wear,
Who are by public bounty fed.

The Tiers sent up a brave six hundred,
To frame their bill of rights and laws ;
The privileg'd talk'd big and thunder'd.
The people felt they'd got their cause.

Adieu monopolies and charters,
Sold for support by men in place !
Adieu stars, 'scutcheons, titles, garters,
That veil the idle from disgrace !

Adieu your fines on feudal tenures,
Paid for the right of voting not !
Intails, church-leases, game-rights, manors,
Your parchment records now may rot !

Adieu your prebends, chapters, deans,
Your spiritual jurisdiction,
Your tests, and all your ways and means
To keep ~~poor~~ conscience in restriction !

The

The French, the French, they had a church,
Which cost five millions in a year ;
They left the clergy in the lurch,
And took the tythes their debts to clear.

No seats in Parliament to sell,
No prince's debts to settle yearly ;
No cash for Rome, or Hesse-Cassel,
No armaments for influence merely.

No tax on candles, salt, or leather,
No tax on wine ('tis not so here) ;
But that we'd laugh at, while together,
Were there but no excise on beer.

'Tis true they did not gain these ends
Without some broken bones and arming ;
But liberty makes all amends,
And nothing happen'd very alarming.

At first the Nobles would not fit
In one room with the Third Estate :
These did not mind their pride a whit—
By this time it may well abate.

The

The king was counsell'd to surround
The assembly with his body-guard ;
They scorn'd to approach the royal pound,
And marshall'd in a tennis-yard.

There, in the face of heav'n and God,
They swore, in danger and in death,
To freedom and the people's cause,
To consecrate their latest breath.

All Paris caught the holy flame,
And snatch'd the warrior's tube of steel ;
Lambesc had to retreat with shame,
Stunn'd by the crash of the Bastille.

The soldiers to a man forsook
The tyrant's cause, and changing station
With fellow-citizens partook
The joy of a deliver'd nation.

The king and queen were still too lofty
To stomach any degradation ;
And laid a plan to scamper off to
Metz, and rebel against the nation.

But

But Lafayette's brave missionaries
Went to Versailles one fine October,
And brought their majesties to Paris,
To drink Seine-water and grow sober.

Then things went on, as smooth as oil;
The laws were sanction'd in a crack;
Aristocrates, with hopeless toil,
Labour'd to argue slav'ry back.

The queen upon her carrot hair
Bound the three-colour'd, loath'd cockade;
And with her Dandin took the air,
Unheeded, on the Esplanade.

To what the patriots could agree in
Louis th' assenting nod conferr'd;
Just like a china-mandareen,
Whene'er you tweak it by the beard.

But signing laws is stupid work,
Compar'd to lettres de cachet;
And so the monarch, with a jerk,
Threw down his pen and ran away.

But

But having stopp'd too long to dine,
And pledg'd the queen a cup too deep;
They nabb'd this merry grig of mine,
And led him home again to sleep.

The French, the French, they had a king,
Who cost three thousand pounds a day;
The French grew tired of the thing,
And told him, Sire, we will not pay;

Unless you let us have a senate,
To look a little into things;
Redress our grievances, and when it
Has left you, Sire, have done with kings.

And, faith! like bold and clever fellows,
They've carried ev'ry object sheer:
May wisdom also blow the bellows,
If such a fire should happen here.

14th July, 1791.

d.

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